



Department of Justice

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JURY CONVICTS DRUG TRAFFICKER WHO SHOT AND WOUNDED MANATEE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPUTY

Tampa, FL - A jury in U.S. District Court today found Tulani James COOPER, age 26, and Jermaine Lenard MOSS, age 27, guilty of separate counts of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute more than 50 grams of crack cocaine and conspiracy to unlawfully use firearms during a drug trafficking crime. The jury also found Tulani COOPER guilty of two counts of using a firearm during a drug trafficking crime, one of which involved the shooting of Manatee County Sheriff's Deputy Lt. Todd Shear. In addition, COOPER was found guilty of one count of possession with intent to distribute more than 50 grams of crack cocaine and one count of being a convicted felon in possession of a firearm. MOSS was also found guilty of a separate count of distributing more than five grams of crack cocaine. The minimum term of incarceration that COOPER faces is 52 years' imprisonment and the maximum penalty is life in prison. The minimum term of incarceration that MOSS faces is 20 years' imprisonment and the maximum penalty is life in prison. The sentencing hearing is scheduled for October 5, 2007, before United States District Judge Elizabeth A. Kovachevich.

COOPER and MOSS, along with eight other defendants, were indicted on November 8, 2006. The other defendants, Robert Lee WILLIAMS, Trinidad Marquez

HAMILTON, Maurice Lashane HAMILTON, Arnell Devon ELROD, Terry Lynn EADY, Anthony Leon WARRICK, Jarvis McCANTS, and Chancey Deon COOPER, previously pleaded guilty to drug trafficking and firearms charges.

According to the evidence presented at trial, COOPER and MOSS were part of a violent drug trafficking organization based in Bradenton, Manatee County, Florida. The defendants used a cellular telephone network to distribute approximately 25 kilograms of crack cocaine which they produced at local residences.

In June of 2006, Tulani COOPER and several of the other defendants confronted three individuals at gunpoint whom they thought had robbed one of their houses of two kilograms of cocaine and several thousand dollars. In July of 2006, the investigation of this drug trafficking organization culminated with the execution of a search warrant by the Manatee County Sheriff's Office at one of the organization's drug houses. During the search, Tulani James COOPER shot Lt. Todd Shear who narrowly escaped being fatally injured after the bullet struck his hand and neck.

In announcing the convictions, Acting United States Attorney James R. Klindt said, "The United States will continue to make it a top priority to pursue and convict violent drug traffickers who use guns to effect their trade, particularly when the targets of their violence are law enforcement officers."

The case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, and the Manatee County Sheriff's Office. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Matthew Perry.